



## Leaders to Promote Marine Businesses in Macomb

Lake St. Clair and the Clinton River could attract business from Macomb County and across the region.

By Edward Cardenas - Patch News - March 14, 2011

Could Macomb County be a tourism hot spot?

Business and political leaders gathered recently at MacRay Harbor in Harrison Township to discuss the potential of tourism and water-related businesses in Macomb County.

Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel and State Rep. Anthony Forlini, R-Harrison Township, were among the keynote speakers Friday. They addressed nearly 50 people who gathered to hear plans to make the county a recreation destination.

"We have made a commitment on behalf of the county that (Lake St. Clair and the Clinton River) is one of our top priorities for an economic aspect, quality-of-life issues and water quality," Hackel said. "Most municipalities have a main street—the county, with this watershed, has a main stream that's the Clinton River."

Hackel has made this a priority by dedicating a position in the planning and economic development department to coordinate the efforts of the watershed council, the water quality board and local businesses for the "Blue Economy Initiative."

A lakefront path along Selfridge Air National Guard Base, canoeing, paddleboating and increased public access are among the projects that could be included in these efforts.

Forlini, a former Harrison Township supervisor, has found that Hackel, State Sen. Jack Brandenburg, R-Harrison Township, and federal elected officials are also making the lake a legislative priority.

Forlini said he has worked with officials in the communities he represents to determine projects that could be funded by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

He said that in the most recent allocation from the fund, Macomb County received only \$70,000 while Wayne County got \$36 million for development and acquisition projects.

"There is an inequity and Macomb County has been underrepresented for too long," Forlini said. "Macomb County has to do a better job."

The meeting also attracted regional leaders including Steve Olinek, interim director of the Wayne County Port Authority. He said the authority is in the process of updating 30-year-old legislation that would allow for bonding of projects outside of Wayne County, which could include Macomb County.

Donna Flaherty, president of Nautical Mile Merchants Association, attended the event. She said she looks forward to having the support of elected officials to bring help and assistance to nautical-related businesses.

"I am just thrilled we are getting the support of Jack (Brandenburg), Tony (Forlini) and Mark (Hackel)," she said.